

NEWS RELEASE

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NATIONAL HEALTH SURVEY UNDERWAY IN WESTCHESTER Residents encouraged to participate if selected

The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), the most comprehensive survey of the health and nutritional status of the U.S. population, begins in Westchester on **Wednesday, May 23**, when teams of interviewers will knock on doors in selected neighborhoods throughout the county.

The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey monitors the health and nutritional status of the U.S. population and is an initiative of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The data collected helps assess the fitness level of children and adolescents, is a resource for developing effective health policies and programs and offers residents who are invited to participate an opportunity to learn more about their own health.

“We want to reassure residents that this is a legitimate scientific survey undertaken by the CDC and we encourage residents who are selected to participate,” said Sherlita Amler, MD, Commissioner of Health. “The information residents provide will help develop public health policy.”

Residents invited to participate in the NHANES program represent the U.S. population of all races, ethnicities and ages. Residents first will be contacted by mail and asked to participate in a health interview conducted at home. Starting on Wednesday, interviewers will knock on doors in those neighborhoods. They will have an identification badge, which identifies them as health representatives working on the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. Residents who qualify to participate will be asked to schedule a follow-up interview. Later, they will have a scheduled health examination in the NHANES mobile clinic that is set to arrive in Westchester this weekend. Participants will be compensated for their time and travel expenses. NHANES expects to complete its work in Westchester by Aug 4.

No medical care is provided directly in the mobile examination center, but a report on physical findings

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is given to each participant along with an explanation from survey medical staff. The various tests and procedures depend upon the age of the participant. All information collected in the surveys is kept strictly confidential, and privacy is protected by public law.

“NHANES serves as the nation’s ‘health check-up,’ going into communities to get health information throughout the country,” said CDC Director Thomas Frieden. “The survey is a unique resource for health information, and without it we would lack important knowledge about major health conditions.”

Each year, residents in 15 counties across the nation have the chance to participate in the latest National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics, which is part of the CDC in Atlanta. The effort has been underway for more than 50 years.

“We are pleased to be able to play a small part in this important effort,” said Westchester Community College President Dr. Joseph N. Hankin. The college’s Valhalla campus is hosting the mobile clinic.

This year, NHANES will embark on a new effort to increase attention to the importance of health related fitness in youth in the United States. This youth survey called the National Youth Fitness Survey will provide additional information with which to evaluate the health and weight of children and adolescents. Given the epidemic levels of childhood obesity throughout the nation, results from this national survey are extremely important.

Public health officials, legislators, and physicians use the information gathered in NHANES to develop sound health policies, direct and design health programs and services, and expand the health knowledge for the nation. NHANES captures data to identify and address health issues that will help people maintain independence and good health. In addition, national references are produced and standardized growth charts are created for pediatricians across the country using NHANES data.

For more information on health topics, visit the Westchester County Department of Health’s website at www.westchestergov.com/health.